

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLB #0114/01 0351553
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 041553Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6471
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3773
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0150
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 0617
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3895
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 3605
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4017
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1552
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0015
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0154
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 4309
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000114

SIPDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO DOJ/OIA DAVID WARNER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KTIP](#) [KJUS](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [PREF](#) [EAID](#) [SY](#)
FR, LE

SUBJECT: JUSTICE MINISTER NAJJAR ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS,
MLAT, AND SPECIAL TRIBUNAL

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Justice Minister Ibrahim Najjar informed the Ambassador on February 3 that he had forwarded a draft trafficking in persons law to the cabinet for approval, a step needed before it goes to a parliamentary vote. He did not expect the draft to face political opposition. His ministry is interested in signing a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with the U.S., Najjar said, noting the bilateral legal agreement signed with France during Prime Minister Hariri's January visit to Paris. On domestic politics, Najjar feared that Syria and its allies would take advantage of PM Hariri's desire to "rule by friendship" to strengthen their power. Najjar also discussed the ongoing visit of Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) Presiding Judge Antonio Cassese, who predicted to the Ambassador that the STL would issue indictments by the end of 2010. End summary.

TIP LAW REFERRED TO THE CABINET FOR APPROVAL

¶2. (C) Justice Minister Najjar told the Ambassador in a February 3 meeting that, after studying the draft trafficking in persons (TIP) law, he had recently approved it for transmission to the cabinet for a vote. If the law appeared on the cabinet's February 5 agenda and was approved, he said, it would then pass to parliament for study by the judiciary committee headed by MP Robert Ghanem before a vote was scheduled. The key step in maintaining momentum on the bill, he outlined, was to ensure that Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Michel Pharaon expedited transfer of the bill from the cabinet to parliament. Once parliament voted the TIP bill into law, it would be published in the official gazette before the Justice Ministry (MOJ) determined how to implement it. After that, the MOJ would conduct training to sensitize judges and prosecutors to the new law. Although one would not expect a TIP law to be controversial, Najjar clarified, other legislation such as a law protecting female victims of violence had earlier stalled in the cabinet due to unforeseen opposition.

MLAT AND ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE WELCOMED

13. (C) Najjar proposed that the U.S. and the GOL study the possibility of signing a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT). During Prime Minister Saad Hariri's January visit to Paris, the two countries had signed a bilateral legal agreement, he noted. Najjar provided the Ambassador with a copy of the French agreement. Najjar also welcomed USAID assistance to the MOJ. The upcoming inauguration of the USAID-supported model court was important, he underscored, because it showed the value of the rule of law to citizens. The MOJ was considering constructing a "judiciary city" to centralize its activities, and he said that he would approach the Embassy and other donors for financial support when plans were finalized.

NEW GOVERNMENT DYNAMICS

14. (C) Although he called PM Hariri "the man for the situation" who sought stability and normalized relations with his opponents, Najjar criticized President Michel Sleiman for "doing his best to help" Syria's Lebanese allies. His fear, Najjar said, was that Syria and its allies would take advantage of Hariri's generosity and Sleiman's weakness to increase their power during the current political truce. Hariri's desire to "rule by friendship" is "something new that we must adapt to," Najjar added.

STL JUDGE PREDICTS INDICTMENTS IN 2010

15. (C) Regarding the ongoing visit to Beirut of STL Presiding Judge Antonio Cassese, Najjar indicated that the STL would need to sign a memorandum of understanding with the GOL to formalize the procedures for any trials that would be held. Najjar, who took a wait-and-see approach to the possibility of indictments, described Cassese as "discovering Lebanon and the Lebanese" during his visit. He also welcomed the opportunity to send Lebanese lawyers and judges to visit the STL's headquarters in the Hague.

16. (C) Cassese met with ambassadors of countries on the STL managing committee earlier the same day to provide an overview of STL progress since its inception in March 2009. The STL's budget is adequate, Cassese said, and he reported that Russia would join the management committee once it upped its contribution from \$500,000 to \$1 million. On prospects for progress, Cassese revealed his hope that indictments would be issued by the end of 2010 and reported continued support from the Lebanese leaders he had briefed, including President Sleiman and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. While Cassese said that he would undertake outreach to the Lebanese public on the role of the STL and the possible timing of its activities, he has not yet publicly mentioned the 2010 timeline for indictments.

17. (C) COMMENT: Although we are not as optimistic as Najjar on the timeline for passing the draft TIP law, such a law would finally provide the GOL the legal framework to prosecute TIP crimes.

SISON